September 22, 1971

Honorable Peter H. Dominick
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dominick,

I was much interested to read your extension of remarks on "drought in Western United States and in Florida" which appeared in the Congressional Record for August 6th.

The political-technological tangle in the field of weather modification for the alleviation of drought is very similar to what prevails in hurricane modification. I am enclosing a commentary on that situation which appeared recently in The Washington Post but which was drafted some weeks earlier.

There are, I am told, technical reasons that might make hurricane modification a more appropriate field in which to demonstrate the efficacy of technical interventions. Three seedings in the storm fury program, conducted under severe restrictions, have already given us a great deal of information and a rather small number of additional trials bids fair to provide conclusive evidence. The question is whether these trials should now be moved to an operational context. I cannot pretend to be a primary expert in meteorological engineering but my interpretation of what I have read is that the obstacles are more political than technical.

Here is one situation where the decision cannot and will not be made by the engineers. Congress and the Executive have an obligation to ventilate the pros and cons and reach a political decision. This will certainly have to include new statutory law to define the recourse available to individuals with claims of unfair injury.

The same, of course, applies to efforts at rain making for one man's irrigation may be another's flood. And a third may be deprived of water he would have received in the "natural" course of events.

The re-equilibration of political interests is a formidable task and I hope you will persevere in your efforts to further the essential political decisions which are a precondition of technical progress.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr
Enclosure